

**TOWN OF ROCKY HILL  
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION  
MEETING OF JUNE 11, 2015**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Jim Tallberg called the Thursday, June 11, 2015 meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. in the Council Meeting Room of the Rocky Hill Town Hall, 761 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill, Connecticut.

**Present:** Jim Tallberg, Chairman  
Phil Benoit, Vice Chairman  
Rocco Sanzo, Commissioner  
Neil Geldof, Commissioner  
Frank Simboski, Commissioner  
Jeffrey Thomen, Commissioner

**Also:** Eileen Knapp, Recording Secretary

**A MOTION was made by Commissioner Sanzo to add to the agenda before Public Comment, I. Approve the minutes and actions of the May 21, 2015 Charter Revision meeting. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomen. All were in favor, MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**II. Public Comment**

Chairman Tallberg went over the process that the Commission went through to create the draft report that is being presented this evening. Copies of this report are available in the Town Clerk's Office. The Commission is proposing 30 separate recommendations for changes to the Town Charter. They are here tonight to hear comments from the public about these proposed recommendations.

**A MOTION was made by Commissioner Sanzo to Approve the minutes and actions of the May 21, 2015 Charter Revision meeting. Motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Benoit. All were in favor, MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**III. Public Comment**

**Mrs. Marty Stiglich of 214 Woodfield Crossing** addressed the Commission and thanked them for their efforts. She said she is happy with the changes that are being proposed.

**Mr. Don Watson** addressed the Commission with a few comments about the proposed changes. He said the Town Charter belongs to the people of Rocky Hill. In Section 203, Board of Education, the Commission is suggesting that the terms be changed from 2 years to 4 years. Mr. Watson said he would like the term to remain at 2 years because it is hard to find people who are willing to commit to a 4 year term. The Commission is concerned about continuity, but a Board Member can run for a second term if they so wish. The other issue Mr. Watson discussed was related to Sections 412 and 601. He suggested leaving Section 412 as is, removing the wording, "or Town Clerk". Under Section 601 he believes the position of Town Clerk should continue to be appointed by the Town Council. Commissioner Sanzo said the reason they are suggesting this change is because the every other position in Town is appointed by the Town Manager.

**Mr. Phil Sylvestro of Knollwood Road** asked that special consideration be given to any suggestions made by Mr. Don Watson. He agreed that the Board of Education terms should remain at 2 years. He feels the continuity is already there because many Board members are reelected for another term. He doesn't see the need to make a change the Town Clerk's appointment by the Town Council. Commissioner Simboski said when listening to input from residents, the Commission kept hearing about continuity being a challenge for the Board of Education Commission. They also looked at the Charters of Wethersfield, Berlin, Glastonbury, Cromwell and Newington and 4 out of those 5 towns had terms longer than 2 years. Mr. Sylvestro said he believes they already have continuity in the way they elect their Board.

**Mrs. Meg Casasanta of 217 Whitewood Drive** addressed the Commission and as a member of the Town Council, she thanked them for their service.

**Mr. John Bedlack of 7 Murphy Drive** addressed the Commission. He is also a member of the Board and he asked the Commission to reconsider changing the Board of Education terms to a 4 year term. He feels that good candidates may not want to serve a 4 year term and suggested they consider staggering the terms.

**Mr. Joe Kochanek of 12 Riverview Road** was opposed to the 4 year term for Board of Education members. He felt that if the Board member was doing a good job, they would get reelected. If the member wasn't doing a good job, the public would have a chance to vote in someone with new ideas. He urged the Commission to listen to Mr. Watson's suggestion and continue to have the Town Council appoint the Town Clerk. He questioned a change being made under Section 703 B. where it states that the Fire Chief shall make rules for the operation of the department subject to the approval of the *Town Manger*. Commissioner Sanzo said they are changing the language from Director of Public Safety to Town Manger, because the Town Manger serves as Rocky Hill's Director of Public Safety. This is only a language change; the Fire Chief will still have the power to make the rules regarding the operation of his department.

Ms. Stiglich said she spoke with friends from Towns with a 4 year term for their Boards of Education and those individuals were not happy with the terms. If you are unsatisfied with the direction that Board is going in, you don't have the immediacy to elect someone else with newer ideas. She asked that the Commission look for another solution to the continuity problems.

**Mr. Frank Szeps of 260 France Street** said he served many years on the Board of Education and twice he served with brand new members. He believes continuity is important and he didn't like having to run for reelection every 2 years. He spoke with Board of Education members from other Towns who supported their staggered terms. This gives the Board members the opportunity to truly campaign and get their message out about what they will do for education in their towns.

As far as the Town Clerk position, Mr. Szeps said currently this is the only position that the Town Council appoints, and he or she does not report to the Town Manager. Some Towns elect their Town Clerk. He is in favor of the change allowing the Town Manager to appoint the Town Clerk. He asked that the Commission take another look at Section 700 and consider removing some of the specificity of job descriptions. He doesn't believe this is something that needs to be stated in the Town Charter.

**Mr. Larry deBear 909 Highpoint Drive** said one of the concepts of local government is that it is one of the governments that is closest to the people it represents. He is afraid that in changing the Board of Education term to 4 years they will bypass one of the tenets of local government, and that is accountability. He feels there should be the same level of accountability for an elected board as there is for the Town Council, which serves two years. He asked that the Commission balance the need for accountability with the need for continuity. They may want to consider having staggered terms. As far as the Town Clerk, this is one of the most visible positions in town government and he suggested making the Town Manager's appointment subject to a vote by the Town Council.

Mr. deBear asked if the Commission gave any consideration to changing the requirements for nominating individuals to the Board of Education, for example, having each party nominate 6 or 7 individuals in order to give voters more of a choice.

Mr. Watson said if the Commission were to stagger the terms for the Board of Education, they would be backdating the history of Rocky Hill 50 years. They tried this system 50 years ago and decided to get rid of it.

**Mayor Henry Vassel of 32 Grimes Road** addressed the Commission. He said this Charter Revision is important for the Town in order to keep it headed in the right direction, even though he realized change can be difficult. He thanked the Commission for their efforts.

**Ms. Judy Sartucci of 33 Brimfield Way** thanked the Commission for their work and specifically for accepting the language changes she submitted for the Section on the Health Department.

Mr. Sylvestro said the way the Board of Education is set up it isn't really an election because 9 out of 10 make the Board. He asked the Commission to reconsider the election process to make it more of a real election.

Mrs. Stiglich said the Town Clerk is one of the most visible faces to the public. She feels you need to have one person to ensure the best possible service through accountability and the right

to hire and fire. This is why she recommended that this position be appointed by the Town Manager. She believes this is in the best interest of the citizens of Rocky Hill.

#### **IV. Discussion and Possible Action on Proposed Charter Revisions**

Chairman Tallberg said they asked the Town Attorney to review the Charter to see if there are any references to statutory changes that need to be changed.

**A MOTION was made by Commissioner Sanzo to correct Section 1103, of the Charter as recommended by the Town Attorney, where it references CGS Section 7-7, the correct section of the CGS is Section 7-6. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Benoit. All were in favor, MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**A MOTION was made by Commissioner Sanzo to correct Section 504, to read, “In the event of the Assistant Manager’s absence or disability, the Council shall appoint by resolution a person, *other than a Council Member* as Acting Town Manager. (The proposed Charter did not include the wording, “other than a Council Member”). Motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Benoit. All were in favor, MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**Town Manager, Guy Scaife of 761 Old Main Street** addressed the Commission to discuss the following staff recommendations.

**Sections 607 Economic Development Commission and Section 608 Planning and Zoning Commission:** The section in the Charter that addresses how the members of these Commissions are appointed is not consistent with Connecticut State Statutes. Staff is recommending adding language stating that the terms of these members shall be in compliance with the appropriate Connecticut General Statutes.

**Section 700:** Staff is also suggesting that the language relating to job descriptions and organizational information be removed from the Charter.

**Chapter 7:** Addition of a Department of Community Development with the position of Building Inspector included in this department.

**Section 809 Transfer of Appropriations:** Town Manager Scaife said the suggestion they are making will allow the Staff to be more efficient with the way they deal with and report their finances. The language currently reads, “At the request of the Town Manager, but only within the last 3 months of the fiscal year, the Council may, by resolution, transfer any unencumbered appropriation balance or portion thereof from one department, office or agency, except the Board of Education, to another, and provided that there shall be attached to the resolution making the transfer a certificate of the Director of Finance that such transfer is necessary, with the reasons therefor.” Town Manager Scaife is asking that the language be changed to allow those transfers to occur within the last 7 months of the fiscal year. The Town has a Contingency account, which is used for unique situations as the demand comes along.

Chairman Tallberg suggested that the Commission take time to review these suggestions before voting on them. The Commission decided to schedule another meeting for Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. to consider all the comments that were made at this meeting by both the Staff and the public.

**V. Adjournment**

**A MOTION was made by Commissioner Benoit to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 p.m. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Sanzo. All were in favor, MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Eileen A. Knapp  
Recording Secretary